



July 7, 2011

Via Email: florencecape@comcast.net

Florence Seldin, Chairperson
Board of Selectmen
Chatham Town Office
549 Main Street
Chatham, MA 02633

RE: Chatham Fire Services Organizational Analysis Report

Dear Chairperson Seldin:

As the final *Chatham Fire Services Organizational Analysis Report* is being developed, we have considered several sources of input and comment. These sources include the consideration of written input from the following:

- Florence Seldin, Chairperson
- Len Sussman, Selectman
- Tim Roper, Selectman
- Mark Pawlina, Police Chief/Interim Town Manager
- Michael Ambriscoe, Fire Chief

As noted in the e-mail that I sent to you on June 29, 2011, Pete Finley will meet with Chief Pawlina on July 12, 2011, and address the issues raised in the Chief's memo. I spoke with Chief Ambriscoe, clarified several points, and updated several technical areas of the report. In reviewing the comments from both yourself and the other two members of the Board of Selectmen, it appears that this input is in the format of additional questions for the purpose of clarification. As such, I will attempt to address each question through this letter. (The questions to MRI, verbatim, are in black; MRI's responses are in blue.) However, Pete Finley will be available on July 12, at 4:30 pm, should any member of the Board wish to review these responses or seek additional clarification.

Questions and comments presented by Selectperson Roper

1. Report Quality

Overall, the 120-page document is impressive in its thoroughness and level of detailed information provided. It was very well-written and largely avoided bureaucratese or opaque language and the author should be commended for that.

There were some errors, such as describing Chatham as a town of 5,530 year-round residents (page 5). And the citing of the seasonal population of 25,000 is not sourced. We hear this frequently, but I have never heard how this 25,000 has been decided other than by hearsay. Since the seasonal population is an important consideration in the deployment and cost of fire protection and emergency services, I would like to have some verification.

Answer:

As of July 1, 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated Chatham's year-round population as 6,751. The initial 2010 census indicates the population has declined slightly to approximately 6,400. This figure is reflected in the report.

Two sources were utilized to determine the seasonal population. The first was the Town of Chatham website which notes a seasonal population of 20,000 – 25,000 and the second was mychatham.com which presents a seasonal population of 30,000 – 40,000. The study team decided to go with the more conservative figures provided on the Town of Chatham website as a more appropriate source of official information. Please refer to the following link for verification:

http://www.town.chatham.ma.us/Public_Documents/ChathamMA_WebDocs/about

Also, on page 55-54 I was a bit confused at first by the presentation of budget numbers for equipment outlays. Looking to the "bottom line" it initially appears the total CFD fiscal forecast for 2012-2016 is \$805,000 when in truth it is \$2,711,100. The study recommends a 5-year outlay of \$2,125,500, but again there is no grand total or "bottom line" that shows this. For presentation purposes, I'd suggest inclusion of a 5-year total figure.

An additional column detailing that the study recommends \$585,600 less than the current plan submitted to the Town by the Fire Department has been added to these tables.

2. General Observations

This study was commissioned before I was elected to the Board, and I am unfamiliar with the original charge. However, it is clear it was flexible enough that the author was able to address more recent events pertinent to Chatham Fire operations, such as the recent request from Harwich to consider co-management of their East Harwich facility.

My first impression is that this report supports many of the observations and long-standing requests of the Chatham Fire Chief. I met at length with Chief Ambriscoe about this time last year, who provided me with a substantial amount of information concerning CFD operations and needs. Although this draft Fire Study takes issue with several of the Chief's points – notably, his views on centralized dispatch – its recommendations often go further than the Chief's proposals and would prove quite costly to Chatham taxpayers if implemented in total.

Answer:

The study was commissioned to provide an outside professional perspective on the operations of the Chatham Fire Department. Through the report, the study team has provided that perspective; however, ultimately the decision on the implementation of recommendations falls to the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting, based upon the level of risk determined to be acceptable. As the fiscal realities of a downturned economy impact the Town, difficult choices will need to be made. The feedback that we received at the two public meetings indicated a strong desire to maintain and/or enhance the current level of fire and EMS services provided to the community. The recommendations of the study present a sharp contrast to the Fire Chief's desires. Specifically, the study team differs with the Chief in the following areas:

- *Magnitude of capital requests*
- *The immediate need for a second station*
- *Reconfiguration of the new headquarters station*
- *The configuration of dispatch operations*
- *Ambulance staffing*
- *Recall of personnel*
- *Developing the on-call force*
- *Training*

Two Fire Stations

For example, the report puts a strong emphasis on the need to build a sub-station for South Chatham, which accounts for 25% of CFD calls. And while the Chief has expressed desire for an aerial ladder truck (costing upwards of \$1 million) the Fire Study recommends the purchase of a less expensive "quint" which could provide aerial ladder



services plus other functions.

But annual operating costs would certainly rise were the South Chatham station to be manned 24-hours and be provided with extra equipment (such as an ambulance and/or wildfire truck) in addition to the one pumper housed there now.

Construction of a South Chatham fire station would help improve response times and achieve various government-based regulations or criteria. It would also potentially reduce the 24,000-sq. ft. size and cost of the currently-proposed new Fire Station in central Chatham, which is now projected to cost about \$8.2 million. But the report basically recommends only the elimination of one bay from the currently-proposed five-bay Fire Station in central Chatham yet retains many of the other proposed elements (large training room, exercise facilities). Given the type of improved fire station proposed in the study for South Chatham, I do not see how we can possibly build two new fire stations within the current estimated budget of \$8.2 million. Thus, while residents in South Chatham and Harwich will likely welcome a second fire station there, the extra cost of building two fire stations will likely cause considerable debate before Town Meeting.

Answer:

The study team feels strongly that a second station in South Chatham is needed. The Town currently owns all apparatus that would be located in this substation including a pumper, wildfire unit, and an ambulance. As such, existing apparatus would be redeployed and no additional equipment would need to be procured. The study team feels that by transitioning dispatch operations to a regional center, current staffing patterns can be adapted to staff the second station and avoid the need to immediately hire additional personnel.

As the study team holds no expertise in architecture, we have commented that the headquarter's station design needs to be reconfigured and we provided a list of the components typically found in a modern fire headquarters facility. The construction of a sub station can be a very basic, low cost facility designed to accommodate a minimum crew. Plus, with construction labor costs down due to the economy, construction costs may be less than anticipated. A cost estimate for both facilities would need to be generated.

Fire and Emergency Services

A. Staffing and Deployment

The fire study explains in considerable detail the manpower costs for the CFD for firefighters, dispatch, and EMT. Yet ultimately, the



recommendation is to expand the number of personnel to reduce overtime costs – a recommendation the BOS has been taken before without achieving the promised fiscal reductions.

I am unsure about recommendation to divide the on-duty forces to 3 firefighters at the main fire station (6 in summer) and 3 at the South Chatham station (6 in summer), if built. While this may be functionally suitable, I suspect we would end up with future requests for more manpower at either station or both.

I was pleased to see the recommendations to curtail the practice of deploying three EMT on transports to the medical control facility (Cape Cod Hospital). This practice is clearly one factor in overtime costs. The study's recommendation – to have one paramedic return to the station unless absolutely needed – seems sensible and should be undertaken immediately.

The study's recommendation that Chatham see a SAFER grant to help pay for 4 more career firefighters is problematic. While the grant may cover taxpayer costs in the initial years, the additional firefighters eventually become a permanent part of an expanded payroll.

Answer:

The study team recommended a functionally suitable staffing level based upon current needs, with the use of grant funds to help offset the initial costs of achieving this recommended staffing. Any future increase in staffing level is a community risk management decision and should be driven by demonstrated need. A SAFER Grant will cover all costs inclusive of benefits for two years, with the community responsible for the third year. We have recommended maximizing the ambulance revenue stream in an effort to cover a portion of this increased cost on a long-term basis. As the public indicated to us that they were supportive of the Department's service level and would be willing to pay more for increased protection, the Town Meeting form of government offers the opportunity for the community to support or reject any request.

B. Training

The report devotes a considerable number of pages to the need for greater investment in improved training, despite the fact that the CFD has exhibited no failures in this area and is considered exemplary by local



residents. The long list of recommended training programs (OSHA, NFPA, etc.) and the personnel, forms and documents required for compliance makes me wonder when anyone would be on duty or have time to fight a fire. I also question the need for a training room sufficient for 40-50 people and include media facilities, etc. ... especially when such a room exists in the Community Center. Recommendation IV.22 sounds to me like another way of requesting we keep the bell tower in the design of the main fire station.

Answer:

A training room with a capacity for 40-50 personnel provides a meeting space and training room that can accommodate the entire Department. Given the expansive training requirements, it is not feasible to deliver all training to the individual work groups and then again to on-call firefighters. This recommended space would accommodate both Department members and instructors, and would permit flexibility for various course delivery and/or learning formats. In addition, many classes such as first line supervisor training are offered at no charge by the Massachusetts Fire Academy. As recommended, this training area would provide sufficient space to bring regional classes to Chatham. Fire service training is very equipment intensive, as an example a considerable amount of space is required when doing CPR training or immobilizing patients.

Recommendation IV.22 notes the need for a limited non-fire practical, hands-on training space. This could be accomplished by building a separate structure at either station. Given that synthetic fibers are utilized in most fire hoses, a hose tower to drain and dry hose is not needed. Should the tower be eliminated from the current design, a radio tower will need to be erected and a separate practical, hands-on training space should be designed. A cost benefit analysis should be done on both options; however, the study team's experience indicates that the cost of a separate training and radio tower may be higher than deleting the current design.

C. Dispatching

The study is strongly in favor of centralizing dispatch to save money and improve communications, which seems sensible to me. Frankly, I was alarmed by some of the current 911 practices described, whereby a cellphone call goes to CPD (and possibly a patrol car investigation) before the CDF may learn of an emergency requiring medical assistance. I think



each of the various options – combined CPD-CFD dispatch, combination with Harwich, or use of the County dispatch deserve study and cost estimation.

Answer:

The study team concurs that the relative cost of each dispatching option, both start-up and long-term, needs to be considered and much of the data currently available is comprised only of rough estimates. However, as the County dispatch center in either its current form, or the dedicated fire/EMS center currently being studied, provides all of the mutual aid coordination and resources on the Cape, we believe that from an operational perspective, transferring Chatham Fire Department operations to the County will provide the best, most effective, and efficient, service to the citizens of the Town.

D. On-Call Firefighters

I very much liked the recommendation that we secure a safer grant and explore an increase in on-call firefighters. Granted, Chatham's demographics appear to make this a tough climb, as do the training requirements. But inasmuch as 75% of America's firefighters are volunteers (as are many Red Cross workers, etc.) this approach deserves investigation, not outright dismissal.

Answer:

The study disagrees with Chief Ambriscoe and recommends doubling the size of the call force over a period of three years. We feel this is a reasonable and attainable goal. There are a wide range of recruitment and retention strategies that have been employed in other communities. Chatham would need to decide which combination of strategies would be most cost effective and likely to succeed, given the unique nature of the community.

E. Community Input

While the report dutifully reports the input received from the community, I think the low number of people who turned out at meetings (25 at one, 12 at another) makes me concerned – especially those who claimed they would not mind paying higher taxes for enhanced services. I suspect if the Board of Selectmen proposed to approve this study on that basis, we'd suddenly hear from many more than 25 or 12.



Answer:

The study notes the results from two posted public meetings that invited input. Obviously, Town Meeting provides a larger opportunity for the public to support or reject the significant recommendations detailed within the report.

F. Emergency Medical Services

This section of the study proved most interesting to me. As noted in other places in the study, there's a "culture" on Cape Cod, and especially in Chatham, whereby the CFD's emergency services have become the first source of medical treatment for those suffering just minor injuries (a cut, a sprain, etc.) and the fire station has become a virtual walk-in clinic serving 1,100 persons last year. Small wonder to me, when such treatment is basically provided free. Granted, the town is repaid for those taking an ambulance ride to CCH, and I support the suggestion we should increase the charge for that to Medicare + 75%. And while I like the recommendation that push for a regional medical facility to handle minor emergencies, we already have one nearby in East Harwich. I think it's time to think of ways to change the culture of dependency on CFD for every cut and bruise or at least have personnel there direct those cases to Fontaine Medical Center.

Answer:

The study team believes that providing the walk-in medical care that has become an expectation of many residents and visitors is an exceptional public service that is consistent with the mission of the Department. This care is provided by on-duty personnel that are in place to serve the community and results in no increased expense other than the cost of a few medical supplies. Personnel are not recalled or paid overtime to provide this service. Maintaining this service should not inhibit the transition to a regional dispatch as technology can be utilized to provide contact with a dispatcher in the event that the station is empty during a call. The dispatcher can then take appropriate action based on the situation presented.

G. Grants

If we must buy new equipment such as a "quint" then obtaining FIRE Act grants should be a priority. The report contends Chatham has had a hard



time obtaining these grants because we are classified as an affluent community – yet we qualified by the federal USDA for wastewater improvement grants that are normally dedicated to low-income communities. Seems to me, this is when our political resources – our Congressmen et al – should be asked to weigh in, at least in obtaining apparatus.

The SAFER grant to add four firefighters is problematic. While it saves us \$500,000 for two years, its legacy would be that taxpayers would pay out an extra \$250,000+ per year forever after.

Answer:

Neither the FireAct (AFG) nor Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants consider the relative affluence of the community. Instead, the grants consider the community's ability to provide these services without the grant. A well-crafted grant narrative should be closely targeted toward the program's priorities and clearly indicate that the proposed initiatives would not be possible without the receipt of the requested funds. Members of Congress do in fact frequently submit letters of support for grant applications submitted by their constituents.

3. Summary

I could go on for several more pages, but I'm pressed for time and I assume we will leave much for open discussion.

In closing, I think the fire study is helpful in letting us address the many aspects we face in fire protection and emergency services. But as in all things to do with Chatham, it raises some basic questions – do we spend, grow and build our government services to serve a community of 6,000 or 25,000? While all agree the old fire station needs replacement, do we need two? While CFD has a great record, especially in emergency services and treatment, should we encourage and build that aspect of civic service?

Answer:

The Board of Selectmen, with community input through Town Meeting, will need to determine the level of risk that is acceptable to the Town of Chatham. The study considers both the base population and the seasonal nature of the community, and attempts to develop reasonable recommendations. Chatham is not a community of 6,500, nor is it a community of 25,000. The study has identified a balance that we feel is appropriate and is consistent with the unique nature of the community.



Questions Posed by Chairperson Seldin

- P. 7 When you say based upon national averages Chatham should have the following resources are these averages for towns of our size or all towns and cities?

Answer:

National Standards including NFPA 1710 and the NFPA profile considered communities with a population under 10,000.

Further down on that page – you suggest that the Department should be compared to other MA Fire Depts. protecting populations in the 21,000 to 25,000 population ranges. Our year round population is now around 6400 and the numbers you cite are seasonal – maybe two months of the year. We also have a large tourist population, people who come for a week or two. These people also use the medical services of the Fire Dept. if a child skins a knee in the nearby playground. Did any of this figure into your recommendations or calculations?

The study suggests we should continue to act as a kind of walk-in medical service. At one point you suggest Fire Dept, increase monitoring of the elderly. What do you mean and why should the EMS perform that service?

Answer:

The Board of Selectmen, with community input through Town Meeting, will need to determine the level of risk that is acceptable to the Town of Chatham. The study considers both the base population and the seasonal nature of the community, and attempts to develop reasonable recommendations. Chatham is not a community of 6,500, nor is it a community of 25,000. The study has identified a balance that we feel is appropriate and is consistent with the unique nature of the community.

The study team believes that providing the walk-in medical care that has become an expectation of many residents and visitors is an exceptional public service that is consistent with the mission of the Department. This care is provided by on-duty personnel that are in place to serve the community, and, results in no increased expense other than the cost of a few medical supplies. Personnel are not recalled or paid overtime to provide this service.

Increased monitoring of the Town's significant elderly population is also consistent with the Department's mission as described above. Allowing the elderly (or any resident/visitor) to come to the station to have their blood pressure or sugar checked



ask questions about their medications, etc. can help them manage their medical conditions and health. This may assist them with preventing a health problem from developing or becoming more serious and provides Department members with familiarity with their customers' health histories prior to an emergency.

- P. 9 You suggest seeking federal grants. I certainly support that but the Chief has said in the past they because of our size and wealth we just do not qualify for such. So is this recommendation really not appropriate?

Answer:

Neither the FireAct (AFG) nor Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants consider the relative affluence of the community. Instead, the grants consider the community's ability to provide these services without the grant. A well-crafted grant narrative should be closely targeted toward the program's priorities and clearly indicate that the proposed initiatives would not be possible without the receipt of the requested funds. Members of Congress do in fact frequently submit letters of support for grant applications submitted by their constituents.

- P. 14 Why does our training room need to accommodate 40-50 people when we just do not have a department anywhere near those numbers? Not all firefighters can be trained at same time which makes the number even smaller. I also agree that the room needs to be technologically up to date because it seems to me that much of the training in the future will be virtual, individualized, or small group modules rather than large group classroom style. I visited several other fire stations on the Cape and none on lower Cape were as large.

Answer:

A training room with a capacity for 40-50 personnel provides a meeting space and training room that can accommodate the entire Department. Given the expansive training requirements, it is not feasible to deliver all training to the individual work groups and then again to on-call firefighters. This recommended space would accommodate both Department members and instructors and would permit flexibility for various course delivery and/or learning formats. In addition, many classes such as first line supervisor training are offered at no charge by the Massachusetts Fire Academy. As recommended, this training area would provide sufficient space to bring regional classes to Chatham.

A training space of this size is typical in a modern fire headquarter facility within a small community such as one the size of Chatham. As an example from a department where I served as Chief, the Town of Northborough (population 10,250 at the time), had a training space that could accommodate 75 people.



- P. 59 The recommendation to seek a SAFER Act grant to add four more firefighters seems again to fly in the face of the Chief's comments that Chatham does not qualify for such. But even if we did your comment that this increase in personnel will reduce overtime has not been our experience in the past and has not been the experience of other towns. I have talked with members of other Boards of Selectmen who say the same thing.

Answer:

We disagree with the Chief and feel that Chatham can qualify for these grants. Reductions in overtime can be achieved through policy and procedure revisions, changes to collective bargaining agreements regarding allocation of scheduled leave, increased monitoring of sick and injury leave, and insuring the Chief is held accountable for achieving projected cost savings (or justifying any shortfalls) anticipated through and/or used to justify the hiring of additional career staff.

- P. 59 Did you find out why we are currently not charging the Medicare+75% amount for EMS transport fees?.

Answer:

Individual communities set their ambulance billing rates. In a Town, these rates are usual set by the Board of Selectmen. Chatham is presently using Medicare plus 60% for rural Massachusetts's communities. It is not clear exactly how/why that rate was chosen. We recommend using Medicare plus 75% for urban Massachusetts, as that tends to maximize the revenue stream. As it is an individual community decision, some communities charge less, and others within Massachusetts charge up to Medicare plus 200%.

- P. 71 How did you come up with savings of \$100,000 with a 7th position? Have you taken into account health benefits, pension costs? Same with savings of \$159,000 if we hire two more firefighters?

Answer:

The savings projected are a reduction in overtime costs anticipated by the Chief. Since the Chief has knowledge of the intricacies of the Chatham system, we included this figure within the report. We have performed several other studies focused on staffing and have found the typical impact is that hiring two firefighters produces a slight increased cost when the benefits and retirement are considered. However, as a general rule of thumb, hiring additional personnel increases shift flexibility, reduces overtime, and increases organizational capability, as well as the number of personnel.



available for recall during significant incidents. Again, this ultimately comes to a community choice and reflects the inverse relationship of overtime vs. the authorized strength of the Department.

- P. 88 So beyond the on time costs to go to regional dispatch are you projecting a cost of about \$87,000 more than it currently costs us? We seem to be only town on Lower Cape that does not have either a combined p, any re. olice/fire (sic) dispatch or uses the regional dispatch. Any reason for this?

Answer:

The reason that Chatham uses a fire based dispatch system seems to be a combination of organizational culture and a perceived need to always have someone in the station. The current annual cost of switching to County dispatch is anticipated at approximately \$68,500. However, the Fire Department will pick up an additional firefighter on each platoon who will now be available to respond to emergency incidents thus increasing operational flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness, and reducing overtime costs. The other costs for ambulance to hospital communication (C-Med) are separate and should not be considered in this assessment.

- P. 89 Rec. IX.4. Why not? How did you reach that conclusion?

Answer:

Five personnel is the minimum to staff a two-station model and staff a three-person engine company and a two-person ambulance. If a lower staffing level is considered, the service level offered will be reduced and both fire and EMS operations will be less effective. Again, this is a reflection of the level of risk that the Town is willing to accept. In the public meetings we held, the theme of accepting less risk through enhanced services was strong. Obviously, the level of risk selected needs to consider both public input and the fiscal reality facing the community.

- P. 96 Census 2010 shows decline of about 300 people from this 6700 figure. That is 2000 census. So our year round population has decreased and is not likely to double in next 50 years.

Answer:

We concur that the population will not double and will remain relatively stabile. A trend to converting second homes into primary homes may have some impact, but we do not anticipate significant growth. The narrative does not suggest that the population will double, but defines the relationship of population increase to call volume. In this case, the narrative presented an example that if the population



doubled; call volume would follow along that trend. We do, however, also anticipate that as the population of the Town ages, there will be some increased requests for service, a trend that will occur nationwide.

- P. 105 In benchmarking Chatham has fire services budget and overtime budget significantly above average. Any idea as to why this is so? And yet the study makes recommendations that will increase department's budget even more and this is a concern to me as both selectman and taxpayer.

Answer:

We believe that the answer lies within the balance that needs to be achieved as Chatham is neither a Town of 6,500, nor is it a community of 25,000. Overtime is higher than average as the number of career personnel is lower than average. Increasing the number of career personnel will reduce overtime and bring that figure into line with other communities' averages. The vast majority of the cost of additional personnel will be absorbed by the decline in overtime. Other differences may lie within the specifics of the comparative collective bargaining agreements.

- P. 109 Is there any reason to have 2 officers on shift if there is only one fire station? In the fire stations I visited on Cape, they had one officer on any one shift.

Answer:

Although some could argue that each crew should have a supervisor, that is not typical in smaller departments. However, the current model does provide the benefit of having the flexibility to have an officer available to respond more than one of multiple and/or simultaneous calls. In addition, we support the concept of two officers for the purpose of staffing the second station.

Finally, was any consideration given to outsourcing ambulance services in the summer season?

Answer:

As the Town already owns three ambulances, and reducing volume would reduce revenue, we feel that the citizens of Chatham are best served by having overlapping responses handled by the Department and the local mutual aid partners. Subcontracting to a third party would result in either a substantial cost to the Town in that it would require that a unit be on standby in the Chatham area, or would result in excessive response times as units would be dispatched/assigned on an as needed basis. In either case, the Chatham Fire Department would still, in all probability, respond to the call to provide initial stabilization, care, and treatment until the



contract ambulance arrived on scene. Although we considered this strategy, we believe it would either increase costs and/or deteriorate the current service level enjoyed by the community.

Questions posed by Selectperson Sussman

1. South Chatham is not the only neighborhood in town that falls outside the ideal response time areas shown in the study maps. Did I miss reference to these other areas in the text of the report and if not, are there statistics on how many calls occurred in these other "underserved" areas.

Answer:

A statistical review of current response times was completed. Presently the Department arrives on scene in six minute or less for 69% of the incidents it responds to. Since an reasonable response criteria looks to a unit arriving on an emergency scene within six minutes, 90% of the time, the need for a second station is indicated. Presently the South Chatham area, which would be served by this second station, produces approximately 25% of the emergency calls and produces the calls with the longest response times. Should a second station be constructed in this area, as recommended, the six-minute or less on scene response time will rise to 90%. There are other areas of the Town that lie outside the on time response envelope. However, these areas do not produce a significant volume of incident and typically result in response times that are closer to the six-minute target than the South Chatham area.

2. It would be helpful to see a breakdown of the calculations leading to projected savings in overtime. At the same time, it would be helpful to see the overall dollar impact of the staffing changes proposed, before potential grants are factored in.

Answer:

The savings projected are a reduction in overtime costs anticipated by the Chief. Since the Chief has knowledge of the intricacies of the Chatham system, we included this figure within the report. We have performed several other studies focused on staffing and have found the typical impact is that hiring two firefighters produces a slight increased cost when the benefits and retirement are considered. However, as a general rule of thumb, hiring additional personnel increases shift flexibility, reduces overtime, and increases organizational capability, as well as the number of personnel available for recall during significant incidents. Again, this ultimately comes to a community choice and reflects the inverse relationship of overtime vs. the authorized strength of the Department.



3. What is the basis for the third bullet point assertion on the first page of the executive summary ("...willing to pay more..."), beyond the thirty+ attendees at two public sessions?

Answer:

As both meetings were posted public sessions that invited input, that is the basis of the input we have presented. The ultimate test of the validity of this input will be the need to obtain Town Meeting support for the significant recommendations outlined in this report.

4. Please describe the functional need for the aerial ladder and our exposure in the event this equipment is not provided by the Chatham Fire Department.

Answer:

The report does not recommend a normal, full size aerial ladder. We recommend a quint, which is a combination vehicle that is a pumper equipped with a shorter 75' aerial ladder and rescue equipment. This vehicle is designed for maximum operational flexibility and to be setup rapidly providing for both firefighter safety and to function as a tool to effect occupant rescue. Contrary to popular belief, the multiple benefits of an aerial device for firefighting and rescue operations are not exclusively for high structures. The greatest benefit of the deployment of a unit of this type would be the rapid setup of the right equipment with limited staff and increased operational effectiveness, efficiency, and safety.

Example: Ventilating a typical roof with ground ladders takes a crew of four personnel. Using a quint, this same operation could be rapidly accomplished with two people.

The study team believes the exposure of not having this type of equipment is choosing to live with an acknowledged higher risk. In addition, there would be an acknowledgement that a very versatile and cost effective way of improving operations and service to the taxpayers of Chatham is not required. You would in essence be making an informed decision that it is an acceptable level of risk to wait 25 minutes, on average, for a mutual aid ladder to arrive on a Chatham fire scene when needed. Additional potential costs include the associated costs of firefighter injuries and the potential for unnecessary increased fire losses and extended operations.

5. How would the study authors challenge the fire chief's assertions about the hopelessness of recruiting and retaining additional on-call personnel?

Answer:

Recruitment and retention of on-call personnel is difficult under any circumstance. This challenge is increased by the demographics of Chatham. We recognize that the Chief is frustrated with recruiting several personnel only to find that perhaps one stays no longer than a few years. We feel that a reasonable goal is to work diligently and double the number of on-call personnel over three years. We feel this is a reasonable and attainable goal. There are a wide range of recruitment and retention strategies that have been employed in other communities. Chatham would need to decide which strategies would be most cost effective and likely to succeed given the unique nature of the community.

6. What, if any, is the functional requirement for the hose tower shown in the schematic plans for the new fire station?

Answer:

There is no need for a hose tower. There is a need for a practical, hands-on training space, which could be constructed separately, along with a radio tower to provide appropriate elevation for communications system antennas.

7. Who exactly are the projected 40 - 50 attendees at training sessions in the proposed new training room? All local, or regional as well?

Answer:

This question was addressed above, but would accommodate internal and regional training.

8. Do the study authors have any comments on the possible use of subcontracted emergency medical services for second calls?

Answer:

As the Town already owns three ambulances, and reducing volume would reduce revenue, we feel that the citizens of Chatham are best served by having overlapping responses handled by the Department and the local mutual aid partners. Subcontracting to a third party would result in either a substantial cost to the Town in that it would require that a unit be on standby in the Chatham area, or would result in excessive response times as units would be dispatched/assigned on an as needed basis. In either case the Chatham Fire Department would still, in all probability, respond to the call to provide initial stabilization, care, and treatment until the contract ambulance arrived on scene. Although we considered this strategy, we



believe it would either increase costs and/or deteriorate the current service level enjoyed by the community.

9. Do the study authors have any recommendations about the use/re-use of the new dual-dispatch center at the police department?

Answer:

Considering the infrastructure adjustments, alerting systems, training costs, the cost of an additional dispatcher during peak hours (at a minimum), and the inherent risk of the single dispatcher model (one person to address walk-in issues, answer the limited secondary 911 system [one terminal only], monitor cells, answer police related telephone calls, answer fire and EMS service telephone calls, and juggle the emergency radio traffic between multiple units from two agencies, we recommend moving toward a regional system. In addition, since the County dispatch center in either its current form, or the dedicated fire/EMS center currently being studied, provides all of the mutual aid coordination and resources on the Cape, we believe that from an operational perspective, transferring Chatham Fire Department operations to the County will provide the best, most effective, and efficient service to the citizens of the Town.

Through this letter, we hope to provide clarification of the content of the Chatham Fire Department Organizational Analysis. We recognize that these recommendations are both divergent from the direction set by the Department and will require significant investment on the part of the community. We believe that the Chatham Fire Department is a sound organization and that the investment in the community will provide the tools needed, a stable operational platform, and the opportunity for the Department to provide an enhanced level of service to the community.

Sincerely,

Brian P. Duggan
(gho)

Brian P. Duggan
Senior Associate

